

Report of the Town Historian ~ Fremont in Review 2019

The month of January was uneventful in Fremont. We had occasional snow during the month until we got a snowstorm on Jan 19 & 20 which dropped about 6 inches of snow in Fremont bringing high winds and very cold air behind it. We suffered through very cold frigid weather especially during the last four days of January that broke many cold records in the Midwest and parts of the Northeast. We were most grateful to not be living in Minnesota or North Dakota where temperatures dropped to over 50 below zero. Here in NH it dropped to roughly 15 to 20 below in places. It was too cold to do much of anything outside.

February & March were mild, but very cold months with only occasional snowfalls to speak of. As of March 31st, spring was on its way with daytime temperatures in the 40's & 50's.

The 10th SB-2 Deliberative Session held on February 4th at the Ellis School Gym attracted 85 people which was the most ever since its implementation back in 2009. Roughly 800 Voters on March 12 passed most of the proposed zoning changes and defeated a few money articles. Still the taxes will be going up here in Fremont AGAIN!

Ellen L. Horsburgh, aged 97, holder of the Fremont Boston Post Cane died April 25th. Ellen moved to Fremont with her husband Bob and family back circa 1952/53 and this family played a significant role for many decades in Fremont's economic, housing development, political, and land conservation matters.

It was a wet dreary spring in 2019. It rained frequently right up until June 20th & 21st, the first day of summer.



The 140th Annual Fremont Memorial Day Exercises were held on May 26th. Abraham Lincoln imitator Steve Woods of Claremont, NH was a special guest speaker and he recited the "Gettysburg Address" to a crowd of about 250. Town Historian Matthew E. Thomas served as the 2019 Guest Speaker; 16 year-old Amelia Earnshaw sang a truly awe-inspiring rendition of the National Anthem, the Grace Notes performed their usual outstanding patriotic and spiritual acapella songs and the

Dunlap Highland Scottish Bagpipers performed two or three nice bagpipe selections including Amazing Grace. Bob Frye & his mother, 94-year-old WWII veteran Mildred (Emerson) Frye were the Grand Marshalls. Mildred is the last surviving Fremont native to have served in World War II. Members of the Emerson Family have been marching in Fremont's annual Memorial Day Parades since 1920! WW I Veteran Freeman Emerson began marching in the parade in 1920 and ever since then his daughter, grandson, and great grandsons have all marched in the Fremont parade. It is doubtful that any other members of another family have achieved that record in any other New Hampshire town.

2019 also marked the 50th anniversary of the death of 21-year-old Philip Pratt, who was Fremont's only casualty killed during the Vietnam Conflict/War on May 31, 1969. Members of the Samuel & Lillian Pratt family have also attended every Fremont Memorial Day Ceremony since even before Philip's passing.

The Historic 1800 Fremont Meetinghouse was opened for tours after the ceremonies.



Memorial Day was a beautiful, sunny day with very appropriate and meaningful military salutes, songs, acknowledgements, taps, speeches and recitations. A presentation was also made to Thomas McGall of Fremont for this being the 50th anniversary of his heroic participation in the historic Battle of Hamburg Hill during the Vietnam War. Many

sincere thanks to all the individuals that work so hard to make this a genuinely memorable, dignified, and solemn annual event in Fremont. This is WHY Fremont was designated by NH Magazine as one of the two MOST PATRIOTIC TOWNS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE BACK IN 2009.

There have been several bear and moose sightings around Fremont this year. Three large moose were seen crossing Beede Road causing vehicles to stop to allow them to do so. Numerous moose, coyotes, bobcats, bald eagles, deer, black bears, turkey vultures, and countless turkeys were sighted and videotaped around town during 2019. When this author was a youngster in the 1960's, even deer were very seldom seen in town, let alone turkeys, moose, bear, coyotes or bald eagles. Because of ever-expanding building development in both southern & northern New Hampshire, many of these wildlife species are being forced further south to hunt for food regardless of development. A bobcat was hit by a vehicle near the Fremont Highway Shed on Danville Road when it bolted out in front of traffic during the annual May Bulky Day. It was injured, semi-conscious, and taken by animal rescue personnel that nursed it back to good health for over a week.

A strong micro-burst/straight-line windstorm struck southern Fremont along Chester & South Roads minutes after midnight on June 30, 2019. It also wreaked havoc by skipping from Chester Road over to South Road where it destroyed numerous trees and branches at 225 South Road extensively littering the yard and driveway. The micro-burst with at least 60 mph winds, systematically blew down every single one of a dozen small American flags – all pointed down in an easterly direction - that had been lining the front of a stonewall on both sides of the Thomas Family driveway. The storm also dropped many wires & several large trees and branches across Chester Road and onto homes and cars all located west of the Jacob Donigian Sr. Farm at 134 Chester Road. A woman from Chester driving home westerly down Chester Road at the time of the micro-burst, had a large tree come crashing down upon her car just

missing her in the driver's seat. Lesser damage was also caused just over the town line in Chester.

This extremely rare Fremont micro-burst did not seem to cause much, if any other further damage, along eastern stretches of Chester & South Roads. One small tree on Scribner Road was also blown down. People living along these roads were awoken at 12:05 am by a huge gust of wind along with some unexpected lightning & thunder that together caused trees & tree branches to come crashing down to the ground. This was the worst damage by a microburst / tornado to hit Fremont since the historic June 9, 1953 Tornado that struck the north side of Fremont barely missing several houses and downing large trees in Spruce Swamp. It eventually caused severe devastation in the Jady Hill / Portsmouth Avenue section of Exeter. This 1953 tornado was one of two additional tornados that were spawned from the horrific tornado that struck Worcester, Massachusetts that same day, killing 94 people along its path. Small tornadoes also struck Fremont in 1929 & 1941.

A 35-year-old East Kingston man, Ryan S. Campano died in a dirt bike accident on the Rockingham Recreational Trail here in Fremont on Monday evening, August 5, 2019. He was found dead off the trail about 11:00 pm by Police. He was found .01 mile south of the Fremont ATV Parking lot after not meeting up with his waiting friend in the parking lot. This is the second fatality to occur on the Trail in the last 4 or 5 years. A woman from the Dominican Republic was found dead on the trail a few years back.

The Bog Bridge closest to the Sandown town line on Sandown Road was rebuilt during the summer of 2019 after the State of NH red-flagged the bridge. It was closed in mid-July and reopened on Friday, August 23, 2019 with shiny new silver guard rails on each side of the bridge. The two Bog Bridges at this locale on Sandown Road are so named because of the once extensive Cranberry Bogs that were found in this section of Fremont.

A mile portion of Chester Road was repaved in two sections in very late July and was greatly improved upon by the cutting down of certain roadside trees and bushes plus the raising of the road in a few sections thus improving the road shoulders much like was done on Red Brook Road last year.

Several more old full-grown trees have been cut down along scenic Fremont roadsides this summer. We have lost many old stately trees that lent considerable beauty to our rural town. Most have been taken down on Sandown, Chester, and Scribner Roads, as well as a few others. Many of these old maple & oak trees have stood like silent guardians along Fremont roads for many decades, if not centuries. Hopefully Fremonters will make an effort to enhance the rural character of the town by planting new trees along the roadside perimeters of their properties.

Land was being cleared across from 125 South Road into four building lots as of late July and early August. Fremont continues to grow and change as time marches on. More and more rural countryside is gradually being developed in town. Iron Horse Industrial Park put up a large

sign at 662 Main Street during the autumn of 2019. This was the site of the former Olson Gravel Pit. Today, the ALTAEROS CELL TOWER is located in this Industrial Park. The huge cell-tower Blimp is a topic of curiosity for many people from Exeter to Raymond where it can be



seen floating up in the sky. At night it looks like a red & white stationary UFO. The huge blimp has been flying over Fremont since December 2018. It was grounded for much of the second half of 2019. There was also considerable concern in Fremont over a large natural gas line & storage facility being built off Route 101 & Beede Road just over the line in Epping, as well

as a large asphalt plant proposed for Shirking Road just over the Fremont town line in Epping. The Asphalt Plant was rejected by the Town of Epping in June.

It was mostly a hot, muggy summer this year. We had some rainfall this summer that proved beneficial for local gardens. Autumn 2019 was ablaze in fall foliage colors throughout the region. It was a colorful autumn for leaf-peepers this year.

The West Brentwood Copyhold Dam is slowly being dismantled and taken down since the current owners cannot afford to make the million-dollar necessary repairs to maintain it. The lowering of water in the Exeter River as a result caused considerable consternation among residents living in Tibbs Grove and Riverside Drive. This dam stands at, or very near the site of the old Copyhold Mill, which dates back to the early 1730's. The river in that neighborhood was practically empty as of October.

The 34th Annual Fremont Grass Drags & Water Crossing Competition took place over Columbus Day Weekend at Brookvale Farm on Martin Road attracting nearly 50,000 spectators from all around the globe during the 3-day event. This is the world's largest event of its type and continues to get bigger and bigger each passing year. Helicopter rides took place again this year.

The United Seacoast Soccer Championships took place off Shirking Road in Epping & Fremont over Columbus Day weekend drawing roughly 2,000 spectators from around New England. This facility has built a large indoor complex within the past year or so and have expanded their parking facilities.

OCTOBER NOR-EASTER - October 16 & 17, 2019 -- A relatively rare October Rain Nor-Easter struck New Hampshire during the evening hours of October 16 and into the next day of Oct. 17th. Winds gusted up to 55mph here in the Seacoast region of NH downing a number of trees, branches, electrical wires, and covering roads in a slick wet leaf strewn cover. The remaining colorful foliage was pretty much decimated as a result of this Nor-Easter. It was the first time I have ever seen Fremont Town Road trucks plowing off tree branches in the roads and scraping off the wet slippery leaves that coated all the town roads. It rained heavily causing ponding on roads, and filling rivers to near flood levels. Here in Fremont, the winds were so severe that

they blew down and ripped apart about a dozen large white tents still standing on Peterson's Fields on Martin Road that were all part of the 34th Annual NH Grass Drags & Water Crossing Competition that took place over Columbus Day Weekend. A large old oak tree that has stood in the middle of the Hoyt-Currier Cemetery on South Road for over 150 years was split about 15 feet up in the air with the top of the tree and all its branches falling down upon several gravestones. Electrical power went out in various parts of Fremont as well. October 17th proved to be a raw & cold blustery day keeping many people inside instead of wandering outdoors any more than what was absolutely necessary.

Halloween had to be postponed until Sunday, November 3rd because of the anticipated Thursday, October 31st rainstorm with blustery high winds. Many townspeople put up some unique and/or interesting Halloween decorations such as hanging skeletons, stuffed dummies, graveyard gravestones, coffins, witches, vampires, illuminated carved pumpkins, and several red, orange & white lights enhancing various ghoulish scenes. Lloyd Bishop put up his annual Halloween menagerie of numerous lit blow-up characters across from the Fremont Village Market much to the delight of many youngsters and adults alike. The Fremont Library sponsored the 2nd annual Halloween Scarecrow Contest so several people around town participated. William & Maria Knee who live on Sandown Road put up a life-size lumberjack splitting wood on a stump. It looked very realistic! This is a wonderful time of the year when one can almost see the ghosts & goblins from old Poplin's past, making their presence known in many haunting and invisible ways. You can almost feel them lurking around the historic, rural countryside of New England reminding us that they too, once lived on & walked these ancient country roads just like we do today. New England's rich heritage comes alive during this time of year when the foliage accents the magnificent beauty of old graveyards, colonial homes, barns, stone walls, old meetinghouses, and rolling countryside.

The 2nd Renaissance Faire took place at Brookvale Farm on Martin Road for two successive weekends in May. Nearly 3,500 people attended this popular and growing event. This is a very colorful, extremely well organized, and exciting event complete with jesters, dragons, jousting contests, renaissance games, crafts, period food, and much more. Fremont is fortunate to have this popular event held here.

Property Tax Bills came out on Nov. 5th and numerous Fremonters on Facebook complained that they were not pleased about the Tax Rate increasing to \$31.50 per thousand. Many property owners complained that they are not getting much for their taxes and that the town is taxing them out of house & home. Many said that they wanted to retire in Fremont but may have to sell because they cannot stay & afford these high tax rates, while others said they would sell their properties as soon as their children finished high school if not sooner. Some Facebook users tried to admonish Fremont property owners for NOT attending the annual Deliberative Sessions so they could learn exactly where their taxes are being spent, or for not studying & voting on the various Warrant Articles without more information that could in turn decrease or increase the tax burden. Roughly 780 people voted at the March 2019 Town Elections out of 3,500+ registered voters! If you care about your taxes YOU MUST pay attention to both School & Town Spending Budgets...that is why we have the Annual Public Budget

Hearing in January as well as the Annual SB-2 Deliberative Sessions so tax payers can ask pertinent questions. Getting frustrated after receiving the bi-annual tax bills isn't going to change what voters passed at the March Town Elections.

It snowed in Fremont for the first time in 2019 on Friday, November 8th. Much of the falling snow came in two or three short snow squalls. The first major snowstorm of the 2019-2020 season began on Sunday, December 1st and fell through the night leaving about 10 inches on the ground come morning.

The 1800 Fremont Meetinghouse was illuminated for the first time in recent years with white, solar battery-operated candles in the front and west side windows for the holiday season. It looked majestic especially with the building covered in snow.

There were plans before the Fremont Planning Board in November to build 12-two-unit retirement buildings upon land where the old circa 1750 John Clough House once stood on the east side of the Railroad bed (now Rail Trail) off South Road. The old Clough cellar hole still exists about 150 feet off South Road.

New "WELCOME TO FREMONT" Signs were put up on the main highways into Fremont in November by the Conservation Commission & Fremont Garden Club. THANKS are in order for the outstanding community service that both the Fremont Garden Club, the Conservation Commission, & Open Space Committee perform on behalf of the town each year. They do SO much to help make and keep Fremont a beautiful town to live in.

In May Heidi Carlson was honored for 25 years of service as Fremont's Town Administrator. Heidi has been an incredible godsend to Fremont over all these years, and is without question one of the most professional, knowledgeable, competent public servants that Fremont could ever hope to have. THANK YOU Heidi for your unwavering devotion and dedication to ALWAYS working in the very best interests and well-being of Fremont.

The Fremont Historical Museum at 8 Beede Road welcomed nearly 300 visitors during 2019, with many coming to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the B-52 Stratofortress Plane that exploded and crashed into Spruce Swamp on August 10, 1959. Family members of the actual crew came from all around the country to see the exhibit at the Fremont Museum as well as visit the crash site. It was the first time in American history that a B-52 plane had crashed and not caused any fatalities. Fortunately, all 8 of the crewmen were able to parachute out just in time before the huge plane exploded and crashed littering the swamp with all kinds of debris. William Kolias of Newton, NH is writing a book about the 1959 crash, & gave three outstanding slide-lecture presentations in October at the NH Aviation Museum in Londonderry, NH to hundreds of attendees. He exhibited several pieces of artifacts that came from the crash site. Local historian Matthew Thomas is assisting him with this project.

The 343-acre Brown Brook Forest donated to the Southeast Land Trust by the Robert H. & Ellen Horsburgh Family, became accessible in 2019 for nature lovers to enjoy hiking upon. This

beautiful canopy of woods with meandering old woods trails also includes brooks and a large beaver pond. This outstanding land acquisition became possible because of the generosity of the Horsburgh Family and hard work by SELT, the Fremont Conservation Commission, and other state & local entities. This land will be forever preserved as a means to protect the valuable water resources of Spruce Swamp, and the Piscassic & Exeter Rivers. MANY GRATEFUL THANKS & APPRECIATION ARE EXTENDED TO ALL THOSE THAT MADE THIS CONSERVATION AREA A REALITY & TRUE GEMSTONE OF FREMONT LAND PRESERVATION EFFORTS.

Former Fremont resident Sally A. Miller, aged 72, was shot and killed in her Goffstown, NH home on June 14, 2019. State authorities ruled her death a homicide. Her killer has yet to be apprehended.

The NH Attorney General's Office found in early January 2019 State Trooper Kevin Dobson was justified in the shooting death of an intoxicated Fremont man who refused to drop his firearm. It is believed the 40-year-old man may have possibly shot himself just as he was opening his truck door to come after the trooper & the trooper opened fire. The incident took place on the Route 101 Exit 6 Overpass on Depot Street in Epping on September 29, 2018.

Former Fremonter Shawn Wickham, 34 year-long veteran reporter with the NH Sunday News & Union Leader was the 2019 recipient of the annual Wheelock-Nardi Advocacy Award held in Manchester. This award is presented to individuals who have provided significant time, resources and awareness helping to bring much-needed attention to mental health issues in New Hampshire. While a resident of Fremont, Shawn was assigned the task of reporting for the NH Union Leader, Teacher-in-Space - Christa McAuliffe & family - before, during, & after the terrible Challenger Explosion on January 28, 1986. Shawn was actually standing right beside Christa's parents at the time of the explosion at Cape Canaveral, Florida. Shawn was one of a long line of Fremonters who were first-hand witnesses to several significant historical events in American history.

2019 marked the 255th anniversary of Fremont - Old Poplin - as an incorporated town. It was also the 165th anniversary of the name being changed from Poplin to Fremont in 1854. It was the 145th anniversary of the founding of the historic Spaulding & Frost Barrel Cooperage in 1874; the 285th anniversary of the first Mast Tree Riot in America in April 1734; the 60th Anniversary of the 1959 B-52 Plane Crash in Spruce Swamp, and the 65th anniversary of Hurricane Carol striking the town & region.

IN MEMORIAM

The Town lost in 2019, well-known Assistant Fremont Town Librarian Marlene Emery, aged 85, on March 22. Marlene had been a long-time fixture as librarian for many years at Ellis School and at the Town Library since 1984. Her cheerful smile, good nature, and love of Fremont will always be remembered.

Kenneth N. Hall, aged 85, died on April 5th and was a Fremont native. He was a very proud Fremonter, who loved sharing information & donating Fremont memorabilia in a deep desire to preserve Fremont's "wonderful history" as he loved to say. Kenneth joined the Navy after graduation from high school and was a submarine master chief. During Operation Ivy, Ken witnessed the FIRST H-bomb detonation on Nov. 1, 1952.

Ellen L. Horsburgh, aged 97, died on April 25, 2019 in upstate New York. Ellen was the proud recipient of the Boston Post Cane for Fremont since 2014. She & her late husband Robert moved to Fremont in 1953 and co-owned and operated the POPLIN FARM EGG FACTORY on River Road on the Fremont/Brentwood town line from 1960 until the mid-1980's. She and her devoted family donated 343 acres of land for Conservation Preservation here in Fremont in 2018 & 2019.

Lorraine F. Downing, aged 79, died unexpectedly on July 25th. Lorraine was a sweet and gentle soul who was a highly respected nurse at Catholic Medical Center in Manchester, and a long-time nursing supervisor at the Rockingham County Nursing Home in Brentwood. She was a dedicated member of the Fremont Garden Club. Lorraine was a direct descendant of the Daniel S. Brown Family who came to Fremont in the early 1800's, therefore she and her children have held longtime ancestral roots in Fremont and have lived and grown up in the same family home which dates back to 1844. She was the devoted wife of 60 years to John "Jack" Downing; and the proud & loving mother of seven wonderful children.

Patricia H. Gerety, aged 77, died September 13th. Pat was a newer resident of Fremont having moved to town in 2012. But in that time she was a dedicated and committed member of the Friends of Fremont Library for several years. She was retired as the Assistant Director of Alumni Affairs at Phillips Andover Academy in Andover, MA. She leaves behind her husband of 56 years Warren, and two daughters.

Edward Wall, aged 94, died September 16th. Ed moved to Fremont in 1987 and operated a Violin Shop on North Road for many years. He and his wife Paula retired to Peabody, MA six years ago. Ed was a former physics professor, cellist, music composer, and repairer of violins & cellos. He received a doctorate in physics from the University of Munich, Germany where he also studied music. He was a former longtime member of the Fremont Historical Society. This author wishes to sincerely thank all those who work hard to help make and keep Fremont a wonderful town to live in. Your hard work & dedication are DEFINITELY very much appreciated by so many who love and appreciate this great old town.



Respectfully submitted,

Matthew E. Thomas
Town Historian

Fuller Memorial Park is located in the heart of Black Rocks Village,
adjacent to the former Fuller Homestead at 258 Main Street.
Photos courtesy of Heidi Carlson and Bob Meade